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SUBJECT: OMAN MEDIA REACTION: MORE OFFICIALS COMMENT ON TIP

1. SUMMARY: After a one day respite on June 22, Omani media took up arms again against the TIP report on June 23. Sayyid Badr al Busaidy, Secretary General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stated that Oman has "protested in the strongest terms," and "the report is unjustified," in a Reuters article carried by regional outlets. The Chairman of Oman's Labor Federation went public with a statement carried by all English and Arabic dailies saying, "the Sultanate's government has taken major steps." Private Arabic-language daily "As Shabiba" carried statements by the Chairwoman of the Oman Women's Association in Seeb. The Deputy Chief Justice and Assistant Attorney General voiced their rejection of the report as part of seven pages of coverage in government-owned weekly supplement to "Oman." END SUMMARY.

Badr: "No Human Violation of Any Kind Takes Place"

2. In June 23 Reuters article, Secretary General of the MFA, Sayyid Badr al Busaidy made a new round of familiar statements. Carried by Arabian Business, UAE News Agency, Radio Sawa and others, the article, "Muscat Protests at US Trafficking Claim" says:

"Oman has formally protested against a US report that says the Gulf Arab state is not doing enough to combat human trafficking, a foreign ministry official said yesterday... 'We have already protested in the strongest terms to the US State Department that the human trafficking claim is unfounded,' Badr bin Hamad Al-Busaidy, Secretary General at the Foreign Affairs Ministry, told Reuters. 'The report is unjustified since the government has worked very hard to make sure no human violation of any kind takes place in the country.'"

"TIP Never an Issue in Labor Forums"

3. In an Oman News Agency report released to all Omani dailies, the Chairman of the General Federation of Workers, Saud al Jabri, issued a formal statement voicing organized labor's rejection of the TIP report findings:

"The federation represents Omani and expatriate workers. The U.S. TIP Report lacks accuracy and credibility. Combating TIP was never an issue in any of the regional or international labor forums in which the federation participated. In addition, the ILO and the U.S. Department of Labor delegation that visited the Sultanate last year praised the Sultanate's progress in the area of labor unions. Omani and expatriate workers are free to join labor unions to protect their rights. There are 40 labor unions so far in the Sultanate."

"No Record of Any TIP Cases in 20 Years"

14. Government and civil society leaders continued the parade of commentaries, editorials and official statements. On June 23, the Minister of Information, Chairwoman of a local Oman Women's Association branch, Deputy Chief Justice, and Assistant Attorney General said the following to the press:

Hamad bin Muhammad al Rashdi, Omani Minister of Information, in Egypt's Arabic-language daily "Al Akhbar":

"In a statement to the Egyptian Daily 'Al Akhbar,' Minister al Rashdi affirmed his country's rejection of the report that accuses the Sultanate of trafficking in persons, pointing out that, following the Omani stance, the United States Administration promised to review the report."

Aziza al Habsi, Chairwoman of Oman Women's Association Seeb in Arabic-language daily "As Shabiba" (circulation 20,000):

"Oman is different from what these kinds of reports are trying to portray. It is so ironic that TIP issued by the U.S. State Department about a peaceful country like Oman. I doubt that issuing the Omani TIP legislation will satisfy the arrogance of the U.S. State Department"

Deputy Chief Justice Khalifa al-Hadhrami, in Arabic-language weekly supplement "Hayati" (circulation 38,000):

"The Sultanate and its basic statute emphasize that the Sultanate does not discriminate...There has been no record of any TIP cases since I started working as a judge 20 years ago."

Assistant Attorney General Muhammad bin Darwish al-Shidi, in Arabic-language weekly supplement "Hayati" (circulation 38,000):

"The upcoming TIP legislation covers all aspects of combating this phenomenon."

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